

SENATE RESOLUTION 124

By Harper

A RESOLUTION to honor and recognize the African Methodist Episcopal Church on the occasion of their 49th Quadrennial Session of the General Conference.

WHEREAS, it is appropriate that the members of the General Assembly should recognize those venerable religious institutions and their congregations that, through their unflagging capacity for love, dedication of spirit, and faith in God, enrich the lives of people in their communities; and

WHEREAS, one such dynamic and historic community of faith is the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AMEC), which is holding its 49th Quadrennial Session of the General Conference at Gaylord Opryland Resort and Convention Center in Nashville from June 27 through July 4, 2012; and

WHEREAS, this year's conference, themed "Exalting Christ to Impact the World," will feature Bishop Gregory G.M. Ingram as the Chairperson of the General Conference Commission, Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie as the Host Bishop, and Bishop John Bryant as the Senior Bishop; and

WHEREAS, the African Methodist Episcopal Church developed from the Free African Society (FAS) who withdrew from St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church in 1787 because of discrimination; and

WHEREAS, the withdrawal was a result of ill treatment at the hands of their white brothers who pulled them from their knees while in the act of prayer and ordered them to move to the gallery of the church; and

WHEREAS, while most of the disenfranchised members wanted to affiliate with the Protestant Episcopal Church, Richard Allen, a former Delaware slave, declined the invitation and instead became the pastor at Bethel AME in 1794; and

WHEREAS, eventually, this visionary leader and stalwart servant of the Lord called other black Methodists in other middle Atlantic communities to join together in Philadelphia and form a new Wesleyan denomination, the African Methodist Episcopal Church; and

WHEREAS, the geographical spread of the AMEC prior to the Civil War was mainly restricted to the Northeast and Midwest, with congregations established in Philadelphia, New York, Boston, Pittsburgh, Baltimore, Washington, D.C., Cincinnati, Chicago, and Detroit, among others; and

WHEREAS, by the early 1850s, this deeply spiritual denomination had reached the Pacific Coast and Bishop Morris Brown took the life-changing message to our neighbors in the North, establishing the Canada Annual Conference; and

WHEREAS, however, its most significant era of denominational development occurred during the Civil War and Reconstruction; and

WHEREAS, equipped with a deep and abiding faith in the Almighty and the permission of the Union Army, the AMEC clergy preached the Word throughout the collapsing Confederacy, pulling newly freed slaves into their community of faith and propelling the membership to over 400,000 by 1880; and

WHEREAS, the estimable Bishop Henry M. Turner continued AMEC's venerable tradition of evangelism as he pushed African Methodism across the Atlantic into Liberia and Sierra Leone in 1891 and into South Africa in 1896; and

WHEREAS, today, the AMEC boasts membership in twenty Episcopal Districts, thirty-nine countries, and five continents with the work of the Church being administered by twenty-one active bishops and nine general officers, who skillfully manage the various departments of the church; and

WHEREAS, the African Methodist Episcopal Church is truly one of the great religious institutions and a catalyst for positive spiritual change in our State and Nation, and the members of this exceptional church should be appropriately honored for their exemplary service to their fellow Christians the world over; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, that we honor and commend the members and leadership of the African Methodist Episcopal Church upon the occasion of their 49th Quadrennial Session of the General Conference and offer our sincerest wishes for their continued prosperity in serving the Lord's mission and ministering to their fellow human beings.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.